

MARKET ORIENTATION IN NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES: A RESEARCH PROPOSITION

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ABSTRACT: *The importance of political parties in the democratic governance of Nigeria, in addition to the dynamics of the contemporary Nigerian political environment, initiated the need for this research. This proposed research aims to examine the market orientation strategies employed by Nigerian political parties. Using qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the research plans to provide insight into the market orientation strategies of Nigerian political parties. The findings from this research would be of relevance for managerial actions in democratic governance, and assist party management and governmental policies and interventions geared towards improving the administration, growth and development of Nigerian political parties. Also, findings from the proposed research will be of relevance to Nigerian politicians, political parties and political regulators in improving their services, programmes, policies and relationships with their relevant target audience. In addition, the proposed research intends to stimulate future research efforts in cognate areas of political party management strategies in Nigeria and other developing economies, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper makes original theoretical, practical, and policy contributions to political parties' marketing management as it situates the market orientation construct in non-profit organizations (political parties). In addition, the proposed research's instrument (questionnaire) will assist in empirical testing of the market orientation construct in political parties operating in developing democracies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa*

KEY WORDS: Market orientation, marketing strategy, political party, democracy, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

For sometime now, there has been increased concern all over the world for modern nations to embrace democracy as the preferred form of government. A major aspect of democracy is the party system, and party competition and democracy are interchangeable concepts (Awa, 1997). Democracy requires extensive political party competition and participation. Therefore, political stability in any democracy is a function of the party system through which political competition and participation are legitimized.

Democracy has to do with choices between and among political parties, programmes and candidates. In contemporary civilized societies, political parties are the best organs for identifying and presenting policies, programmes and candidates to the electorates. Therefore, the growth of democracy in any society is stunted and its sustenance sabotaged if political competition is stifled and the electorates fail to fully exercise their rights to freely choose their rulers and representatives

free from fear, intimidation, bribery and coercion. Political parties are in the best position to enhance/constrain political competition and participation through the strategies they employ in relating with the electorates and rival political parties in order to achieve their set political goals. Ediraras et al (2013) have opined that political parties, generally, are important in electoral systems, and usually are the focus of media organizations, general public/voters, regulators and politicians.

Most developing countries, including Nigeria and other African countries, have limited resources and uneven distribution of wealth and infrastructure (Tunio et al (2017). Many African countries, including Nigeria, have adopted the multi-party system of democracy, and the political environment and voters have become more sophisticated than they used to be many years ago. Therefore, political parties in democratic African countries need strategies that will enable them relate with the electorates and cope with the prevailing political environment in order to achieve set political goals.

Nigeria constitutes an important part of the world economy, especially in the West African sub-region where it accounts for substantial part of the political, social and business activities. Its claim to recognition in the comity of nations is due, substantially, to its population (Iloeje, 2005). Its population represents approximately one in four of all black people in the world. It may rightly be described as the economic, social, and political summary of the West African sub-region. Therefore, it can be stated that the fate of the black person in the world is largely dependent on the fate of Nigeria as a country. As a result, Nigeria has a great leadership role to play in the advancement of modern forms of government (such as democracy) in Africa and the black world. Also, political developments in Nigeria have weighty implications for the stability of the country, the security of investments and the general prospects for business and other issues in the country. Political stability in Nigeria is a foremost factor in the conduciveness of an environment for beneficial investment activities (Oduyemi, 2002). Generally, political activities have always shaped the nature and scope of the Nigerian polity (Jeter, 2003).

Certain factors, such as constitutional issues, the fiscal system, legal and institutional complexity, low incentives, poverty, illiteracy, corruption and political instability, are some of the major problems confronting Nigeria presently. Also, human development indicators in Nigeria are generally below the average for sub-Saharan Africa. The presence of political instability in Nigeria, for example, has created violent tendencies among Nigerian politicians, very slow rate of growth and development in the relevant indices, non-beneficial social activism, and lack of knowledge and interest among Nigerian citizens regarding their rights, duties, obligations, tasks and responsibilities. Political instability in Nigeria is, substantially, as a result of poor management practices and strategies in Nigerian political parties. With the presence of political instability occasioned by poor managerial practices and strategies in Nigerian political parties, the interest in, and acceptance of, democratic values by Nigerians would be doubtful. These problems have combined to destroy many aspects of the Nigerian society, and undermined the confidence of the Nigerian public in governance and democracy (Thomas, 2004).

Democracy thrives on constructive criticism, differing opinions, competition and alternative policy choices (Jeter, 2003). Political activities in Nigeria are supposed to serve as affirmations of Nigerian democracy, and are supposed to encourage the creative passion of Nigeria's best and brightest to offer solutions to the country's myriads of political, economic, social and developmental problems. Political activities in Nigeria are, also, supposed to involve processes where Nigerians are treated to the full discussion of the critical issues facing the country using appropriate strategies and practices. Therefore, political activities in Nigeria are supposed to be undertaken by political parties via approved competitive approaches and strategies. However, Madunagu (2003) laments that political activities in Nigeria are akin to civil wars.

Political elections in Nigeria are, also, supposed to prove the ultimate test of Nigeria's democratic structures, processes and nationhood. Also, as Africa's largest democracy and leading economy, political elections in Nigeria have relevance for sub-regional, regional and continental peace and world energy security (especially as a leading oil exporter). Therefore, for Nigeria to develop democratic structures and processes and have relevance in regional and continental peace and global energy security, political elections in Nigeria should be free and fair reflecting the choices of Nigerian voters. Free and fair elections in Nigeria would then bring forth truly representative and accountable government which can effectively address the needs, wants and desires of Nigerians, and set the country on the part of growth and development. According to Ekpu (2007), most of the political parties in Nigeria lack the focus, the cohesion and managerial strategy to provide leadership in a democracy.

Nigeria has a history of hotly contested political elections in 1959, 1964, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. Political elections in Nigeria have been susceptible to manipulations by parties, politicians and interest groups who have tried by all means to acquire political power. In most cases, the stages of electoral process in Nigeria (from voter registration to selection of candidates during party primaries, and from actual voting to the announcement of election results), have been characterized by various forms of manipulation and abuse, with the electorates emerging as the worst loser in the Nigerian electoral process as they (electorates) are being represented by people (politicians) and political parties they (electorates) did not choose (Bagshaw, 2007).

Therefore, in the many years of political elections in Nigeria, the perception and usual cynical reaction of Nigerian electorates towards elections results have remained the same. Specifically, lack of trust in the electoral system and dispute over election results by the electorates have been the salient features of political elections in Nigeria. Relatedly, Agbese (2007) laments that Nigeria had been turned into a one-party state with the ruling party as the sole party. This has been the biggest concern over general elections in Nigeria because the rights of the people (electorates) to freely choose their leaders and legislative representatives have been severely constrained.

Also, there are contests and competition within Nigerian political parties. Political party primaries, for example, are a unique feature of the presidential system of government (Abu, 2007). Over the years, the practice of party primaries has evolved as a method by which political parties choose

their nominees for elective positions. In the USA (where the practice of party primaries is a salient aspect of democratic culture), the practice of party primaries has grown in relevance. In such party primaries, party members look forward to their party primaries with enthusiasm because party primaries afford them the opportunity to be part of the selection process that would eventually produce party candidates. Party primaries are, also, a kind of examination because they are platforms for political candidates to showcase themselves. However, in most cases of party primaries in Nigeria, there were no serious contests because candidates were imposed on the party members at federal, state and local government levels. This means that the choices of party members were not considered. Also, the practice of foisting political candidates on the electorates took place at non-party levels through rigging and intimidation of electorates by political thugs and agents of government.

Politics is synonymous with party politics in developed democracies. Specifically, modern democracy is synonymous with party democracy where political institutions and practices are the essence of democratic governance. In short, modern democracies are the creations of political parties, and modern democratic tendencies would be substantially unthinkable without political parties. Political parties and their leaders attract huge media attention across the world (Petrenko, 2020). Political parties are not only central to modern democracy, they are important for any research on democratic behaviour and managerial practices (O’Cass, 2001). Therefore, research on the managerial tendencies of political parties should, among, others, examine the strategies of political parties in different cultures and contexts. This is because managerial practices and strategies have been implicated in the success or failure of most profit and non-profit organizations, including political parties. Against this background, it is, therefore, pertinent to investigate empirically the extent to which Nigerian political parties consider their electorates and the relevant political environment in their political activities.

Marketing in Politics

Many Nigerian governments (since 1986) have embraced the structural adjustment programme (SAP) and democratic governance. The SAP and democratic forms of governance emphasize, to some extent, the free-market orientation or philosophy in many sectors of the Nigerian economy. Specifically, the philosophy of free-market economy and democratic governance emphasizes competition, freedom, rule of law and openness. Consequently, some Nigerian organizations (profit and non-profit organizations) have instituted reforms, practices and strategies for success, growth and development of their organizations. These reforms, practices and strategies, to some considerable extent, have encouraged interest, understanding and application of marketing knowledge and theories in the management of Nigerian organizations (Winston and Dadzie, 2002). As a result, Nigerian organizations (profit and non-profit) have adopted some management policies and strategies, and these policies and strategies have highlighted the relevance of marketing strategies and performance (Okoroafor, 2004). According to McKenna (1991), marketing is everything and everything is marketing, and this pertains to the relevance of marketing in both profit and non-profit organizations (including political parties). Conceptualizations of marketing have changed from 1935 to date, with focus on marketing approaches to be used by organizations in order to be efficient and effective (Sanclemente-Tellez, 2017). Even presently, marketing has

been affected to the extent that COVID-19 has been seen as, perhaps, one of the important factors that will alter modern marketing practice and philosophy (He and Harris, 2020).

One of the management strategies used by political parties in developed economies to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in political party management is marketing strategy. Political parties in some parts of developed and developing countries utilize marketing strategies to improve their performance in electoral contests, have access to relevant voters and party members, compete better than rival parties, and enhance beneficial interaction with their voters, citizens and other relevant stakeholders. As a result, they (political parties) help in the growth and development of their countries' political party system and democracies, especially in active participation of their countries' nationals in beneficial social, political and economic activities, among others. Therefore, the linkages among political parties, the electorates and the society at large (which may be achieved via marketing strategies) need to be investigated and understood in both developed and developing countries because understanding such linkages is important for efficient and effective democratic practice and development (O'Cass, 2001). However, Lilleker (2005) has cautioned on the negative consequences of employing marketing techniques in politics. One of the consequences has been the move from mass to cadre party, where decision-making is placed in the hands of few party leaders rather than involving their members. In addition, the targeting of specific groups of voters can mean that core party supporters are ignored in the name of electoral success.

According to Simons (2019), conceptualizations of political marketing have been varying depending on time, experience and political environments, and efforts have been made in contemporary times to expand the intellectual and practical scope of political marketing (Simons 2020b). Political marketing can be conceptualized as deliberate and sustained strategic and tactical efforts directed towards creating and maintaining political connections with relevant targets of interests in order to achieve set political goals and objectives within a political environment using appropriate marketing practices and strategies (Simons, 2020a). Glaser (2019) argue that political marketing (which is characterized by competent, adequate and organized exposure to relevant publics of interest) is the totality of marketing techniques directed towards achieving support from relevant population of political interests in order to achieve set goals and objectives. Political marketing is typically thought of as being an organized engagement because political parties and individuals strive to impact and convince relevant political entities of interest to achieve set goals and objectives (Simons, 2019). Therefore, political marketing can be conceptualized as mutually-satisfying exchange transactions and relationships between and among relevant political entities within environments, and using appropriate marketing strategies and tactics, to achieve set political goals and objectives.

Political marketing in some countries, USA for example, is regarded as a source of innovation in political campaigning techniques (Kavanagh, 1995); at the cutting-edge of electioneering innovation (Blumber et al, 1996); and as a world role-model for political marketing activities for other countries (Scammell, 1997). As a result, political marketing in the USA has brought about a transnational diffusion of American political marketing strategies (Farrell, 1998; Baines et al,

2001). According to Scammell (1997), American style of political marketing strategies is likely to be incorporated into the political practices of those countries (such as Nigeria) where political conditions are similar to those of the USA, at least in principle.

In the political marketing actions of political parties in some countries, marketing programmes are designed using relevant marketing frameworks (such as marketing-mix elements, market orientation, and relationship marketing, among others), and grouping of voters is done using the market segmentation framework. Political parties in some countries also engage in political marketing activities via communication of their ideas and messages, development of political identities, interaction with relevant internal and external stakeholders, collection and analysis of relevant data, provision of training for party campaigners, and influencing of voter behaviour periodically (Ediraras et al, 2013). In some countries, political marketing activities are being conducted via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, among others (Williams, 2017). For instance, in India, political parties utilize digital/social media in their political marketing activities (Safiullah et al., 2017). Also, major political parties in Canada utilize political marketing via voter segmentation (Dufresne & Ouellet, 2019). In addition, some scholars have shown research interest in consumer's political identity behaviour in order to provide relevant insights for political marketing activities (Jung & Mittal, 2020). Therefore, social media for political marketing purposes can be seen as a marketplace for buyers (voters), sellers (political parties) and exchange facilitators (regulators) exhibiting complex forms of interactions (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016).

Political parties in some democracies in the USA, Canada, Europe, and India, among others, utilize marketing tools and techniques in their activities and political activities in this context are analyzed using the strategic marketing management school of thought (Henneberg, 2003). A major strand of the strategic marketing management school of thought for political marketing is market orientation (Lees-Marshment, 2001). Generally, marketing principles, tools and techniques are used by political parties to optimize strategic aspects of political activities in such activities as fundraising, managing party volunteers, constituency services, and interaction with lobbying groups, governments, legislators and voters, among others. Also, in developed democracies, political marketing has been argued to have improved political parties' responsiveness to voter concerns, and revolutionized aspects of political campaigning, among others (Lilleker, 2005).

However, as political participation and strong party loyalties wane, political parties and politicians try hard to woo the electorates, and the use of new techniques of persuasion in this context has been regarded as heralding the rise of market-oriented political parties (Coleman, 2005). According to Rogers (2005), public support for political parties has declined, and the days of mass membership of political parties have gone. Generally, negative behavioural attitudes of citizens in many countries towards formal political institutions have been documented in extant literature (Clarke, 2015; Clarke et al., 2017). Even in some organizations, political behaviour is negatively viewed as any unauthorized action or behaviour by a person, or illegal use of organizational power or authority for personal or group interests (Naiyananont & Smuthranond, 2017). Therefore, political institutions, including political parties, need to design management strategies that will enable them understand and cope with relevant political environments, including behaviours of

organizational members and other relevant stakeholders, in order to achieve their organizational goals. Specifically, political institutions/parties need to design efficient and effective marketing strategies. According to Molander et al (2018), achievement of citizens' interests by organizations (including political parties) is accomplished via the utilization of market-oriented management methods and strategies.

The use of management-like strategies by political parties (especially in developed economies such as the USA, Canada and UK) in their political activities has been discussed and documented in relevant extant literature (Baines and Egan, 2001; Lees-Marshment, 2001; O'Cass, 2001; and Newman, 2002, among others). In developed democracies, political parties use marketing strategies to plan better and target potential group of supporters with policies and programmes. Also, studies are conducted in developed democracies regarding the effectiveness of different marketing strategies used by political parties (Wring, 1996). However, a major weakness in the political marketing literature is its heavy concentration on issues drawn from the political systems and parties in developed democracies of USA and UK. These two countries are not typical of most democracies (Butler and Collins, 1996). Therefore, examining political marketing practices and strategies in a developing democracy (such as Nigeria) will offer additional insights pertaining to the managerial tendencies of political parties beyond the insights gained from the traditional developed democracies of UK and USA. In addition, analyzing political marketing practices and strategies in a developing democracy (such as Nigeria) will provide insight into the practices and strategies that are theoretically valuable in linking political parties in a developing democracy and their voters, members, funders and other relevant stakeholders and issues. A salient strand of the strategic marketing management school of thought for political marketing is market orientation (Lees-Marshment, 2001).

Market Orientation Strategy

The major anchor of marketing strategy is market orientation, and it (market orientation) has been widely accepted by scholars and organizational executives (in profit and non profit organizations, including political parties, as the implementation of the marketing concept (Gunnay, 2005); as an integral aspect of market economies (Matsuno et al., 2005); and as one of the organizational management practices leading to competitive advantage in nations and organizations (Olson et al., 2005). According to Slater and Narvar (1994), an organization is said to be market-oriented when its culture is systematically and entirely committed to the continuous creation of superior value or satisfaction for its customers, clients or relevant markets of interest. Specifically, market orientation in an organization entails collecting and coordinating data and information on customers/clients, competitors and other relevant environmental factors that would help an organization to achieve set goals and objectives. Therefore, decision-makers in various organizations (profit and non-profit organizations), industries and cultures have been advised to embrace market orientation strategies in their decision-making activities (Harris and Ogbonna, 2001).

Market Orientation is a model of strategic marketing management practice that emphasizes customer satisfaction, coordination of functional marketing activities, sensitivity to competition

and intelligence, and mutually-satisfactory measures of performance. It is supposed to guide actions of organizational managers, and its relevance lies in its capability to satisfy customers and clients, in addition to achieving organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Varela and Rio, 2003). The market orientation construct has been seen as the key issue in management philosophy anchored on the marketing concept, and studies pertaining to market orientation have spread beyond the domain of marketing to non-profit activities such as politics (Deshpande and Farley, 2004; Appiah and Ranchhood, 1998). Narver and Slater (1990) submit that the major components of market orientation are customer orientation, competitor orientation, cross-functional coordination of marketing activities, and performance measure.

Market orientation has, also, been conceptualized as one aspect of organizational resources that forms an organization's distinctive resource, and constitutes a basic organizational resource that is found in all organizations' functions (Hooley et al, 2005). According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990), organizations are different regarding the extent to which they are market-oriented (i.e., generate market intelligence, disseminate the market intelligence, and act on the market intelligence). Therefore, a measure of market orientation in any organization (profit or non-profit) should assess the degree to which an organization is market-oriented in terms of focus on the needs/wants of customers/clients, coordination of functional management activities to address the needs and wants of customers, being sensitive to the relevant environment, in addition to generating relevant information, disseminating the information to relevant units in the organization, and acting or responding on the information for managerial decisions that will lead to the achievement of set goals and objectives. Traditionally, customers, clients or relevant audience have been considered as the primary focus of market orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993).

Market orientation has been widely accepted by scholars, academics and organizational managers as the implementation of the marketing concept, and the marketing concept is concerned with satisfaction of relevant customers and clients at benefits to the organization. The marketing concept has been classified into two: the "old" marketing concept and the "new" marketing concept. According to Gunnay (2002), while the "old" marketing concept is concerned with customer-orientation, innovation and profit as an inducement for creating satisfied customers/clients (i.e., a management philosophy), the "new" marketing concept is more than a philosophy; it is a way of conducting organizational activities (i.e., a culture). The new marketing concept comprises customer or client orientation, market intelligence (data and information), distinctive advantages, value or quality delivery, market targeting and value proposition, customer/client-defined total quality management, continuous improvement in goods and services, customer/client-oriented organizational culture in the whole organization, and coordinated and integrated activities in the whole organization tailored towards achieving better efficiency and effectiveness than competitors. Jaworski and Kohli (1993) posit that the marketing concept (which is the philosophical foundation of a market orientation strategy) is the cornerstone of marketing thought and practice. According to Narver and Slater (1990) market orientation is a major philosophy of marketing, and as an integral part of market economies (Matsuno et al, 2005). Narver and Slater's (1990) conceptualization of market orientation can be described as based on organizational culture while Kohli and Jaworski's (1990) conceptualization of market orientation

can be described as based on information and its utilization (Gromark and Melin, 2013). According to Sisay et al (2017), market-oriented organizations seem to perform better than less market-oriented organizations with regard to responses to market needs and wants.

Market Orientation strategy requires top management leadership, a customer focus, competitor intelligence and inter-functional coordination in order to satisfy needs/wants, cope with the environment and achieve organizational goals and objectives. It, also, entails establishing and maintaining mutually-satisfactory relationships with customers/clients. It refers to the organization-wide generation of market intelligence/information, dissemination of the intelligence and organization-wide responsiveness to the intelligence in its activities (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Market orientation is a major factor impacting on organizational performance (Narvar and Slater, 1990). However, the impact of market-orientation on organizational performance depends on certain internal and external organizational factors (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). Specifically, it has been argued in extant literature that a market orientation strategy may have a strong or weak impact on organizational performance depending on certain environmental factors such as top management support, technological development and competitive intensity, among others (Houston, 1986; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). Also, Gromark and Melin (2013) posit that, although market orientation is the dominant marketing management paradigm, it is myopic, mechanistic, lacks genuine interaction, and has excessive foci on economic values and customers/clients.

Market orientation in any organization should have long term objective focus. For non-profit organizations (such as political parties), the major long-term objective is organizational survival (Narvar and Slater, 1990). Therefore, studying, understanding and satisfying the major organizational constituencies/markets, among others, will lead to organizational survival in the long run (Kotler and Andreason, 1987). For a political party, winning elections (capturing power) is a major route to organizational survival, and it is those political parties that study, understand, and satisfy the relevant markets or constituencies that can achieve long-term organizational survival (Osugwu, 2008).

Although the market orientation construct has attracted interest in academic research and practice, there is confusion regarding its definition, measurement, practice and development, especially in non-profit organizations such as political parties (Matsuno et al, 2005). Some research efforts have been made to clarify relevant issues pertaining to the theory and practice of market orientation strategy in developed economies (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narvar and Slater, 1990, among others). However, it has been argued that further research is needed in different cultures and sectors, especially in non-profit organizations such as political parties (Harris and Ogbonna, 2001). Specifically, O'Shaughnessy (1990) has proposed that research and debate should focus on the market orientation strategies of political parties. Also, Chelariu et al (2002) have advised, with regard to Sub-Saharan African countries (including Nigeria), for the designing of market orientation research measures which will capture the unique peculiarities, practices and strategies of various organizations, sectors and industries in such countries. In this regard, some research efforts have been made with respect to the strategies of business organizations in Sub-Saharan African firms (Appiah-Adu, 2001, Chelariu et al., 2002; Okoroafo, 2004; Osugwu, 2004;

Osuagwu, 2006; and Winston and Dadzie, 2002, among others). However, not much research effort has been undertaken regarding the market orientation strategies of non-business organizations, such as political parties, operating in sub-Saharan African economies in contemporary times. According to Hooley et al (2005), market orientation strategy is the only widely accepted and empirically-derived scale for measuring the marketing strategies of organizations (profit and non-profit organizations) in developed and developing economies.

Presently, Nigeria operates a democratic regime, with about eighteen (18) recognized and registered political parties. These political parties are supposed to employ different forms of marketing strategies in order to cope with the prevailing political environment and achieve success in their political activities. However, the achievement of set political party goals and objectives depends, substantially, on the acceptance of political parties by electorates and other stakeholders. In contemporary Nigerian political environment, voters and other stakeholders would prefer political parties that can deliver coordinated long-lasting satisfaction via the politicians, policies and programmes that they (political parties) offer. Political party managers can achieve their organizational goals and objectives through the market orientation strategies they employ. No known research effort has been undertaken to investigate, systematically and empirically, the market orientation strategies of Nigerian political parties. This paper proposes a research direction to provide empirically-based evidence to fill this void. According to Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy (2007), research, including political marketing research, is about knowledge creation comprising finding of relevant facts and development of theory.

Research on political marketing in developed democracies has established itself as a sub-discipline of mainstream marketing. However, stagnation in knowledge development exists, especially with respect to developing democracies in sub-Saharan Africa such as Nigeria. Therefore, any research that examines the linkages between marketing and political phenomena and systems is timely and warranted, especially in developing countries (such as Nigeria) that have embraced democratic regimes. Compared to political parties in developed democracies, no known empirical research effort exists regarding market orientation strategies in Nigerian political parties, including the associated effectiveness and performance impact of market orientation strategies. The proposed research, therefore, attempts to provide empirical facts regarding market orientation strategies of Nigerian political parties, antecedents of market orientation in Nigerian political parties, and impacts of market orientation strategies on the performance of Nigerian political parties. A proper understanding of the market orientation strategies of political parties in Nigeria will assist policy design and managerial actions geared towards achieving efficiency and effectiveness in political parties, especially in Nigeria where the ropes of democratic governance are being learnt. The findings from the proposed research will provide an initial move to combat the dearth of empirically-based literature and facts regarding the market orientation strategies of political parties in Africa's largest democracy (Nigeria).

Statement of Proposed Research Problem

Utilizing the seminal works of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narvar and Slater (1990), among others, the broad research questions (research problem) guiding the proposed research are:

1. To what extent are Nigerian political parties market-oriented in terms of focus on their voters and members; use of coordinated marketing practices in their political activities; and seek to achieve set political goals?
2. To what extent do Nigerian political parties generate relevant market information, disseminate the information and act on the information in their political activities?
3. What are the antecedents of market-orientation practices in Nigerian political parties?
4. What are the impacts of market orientation practices on the performance of Nigerian political parties?

Therefore, based on the proposed research problem, the specific questions guiding the proposed research are:

1. To what relative extent do political parties in Nigeria emphasize satisfaction of their target audience (electorates/voters, etc) in their political activities?
 2. To what relative extent are political parties in Nigeria sensitive to information collection, dissemination and utilization in their political activities?
 3. To what relative extent do top management's support, competitive intensity and technological development determine the practice of market orientation in Nigerian political parties?
 4. To what relative extent do political parties in Nigeria emphasize the achievement of set political goals and objectives via market orientation strategies?.
 5. To what extent do Nigerian political parties adopt a systematic approach to monitoring the strengths and weaknesses of rival political parties?
 6. To what extent do Nigerian political parties engage in post-election market-oriented strategies?
 7. To what extent do Nigerian political parties develop their strategies in response to their knowledge of voters and political environmental factors?
 8. What is the impact of market-oriented practices on the performance of Nigerian political parties?
- It is the objective of the proposed research to provide data-based answers to the above questions.

Research Objectives

The major objective of the proposed research is to provide knowledge regarding market orientation strategies of Nigerian political parties. Specifically, the objectives of the proposed research are to:

1. determine the extent to which Nigerian political parties emphasize different dimensions of market orientation strategies.
2. determine the extent to which top management of Nigerian political parties, competitive intensity and technological development have determined the practice of market orientation in Nigerian political parties.
3. determine the extent to which Nigerian political parties have been effective in achieving their set goals and objectives via market orientation strategies.
4. assess the relative influence of market orientation strategies on the goals of Nigerian political parties.
5. determine the validity and reliability of the research measures to be used in the proposed research.
6. make managerial and policy recommendations for improved understanding and practice of market orientation strategies in Nigerian political parties.

7. Suggest cognate areas for future research.

Research Hypotheses/Propositions

The propositions of the proposed study, derived from the statement of problem, extant literature, and anecdotal evidence in the Nigerian political environment, are that:

1. Nigerian political parties emphasize dimensions of market orientation to a low extent.
2. Nigerian political parties emphasize satisfaction of their target audience (voters/electorates, party members) to a low extent.
3. Nigerian political parties do not emphasize systematic collection, dissemination and utilization of information in their marketing activities.
4. Leadership/top management support, competitive intensity and technological development do not determine the practice of market orientation strategies in Nigerian political parties.
6. Market orientation strategies have not influenced the achievement of the goals of Nigerian political parties.

ASSOCIATED LITERATURE TO BE REVIEWED

It is proposed that relevant literature review be conducted using meta-analysis approach in the cognate areas of the research topic. Specifically, relevant literature should be reviewed in the areas of political marketing, strategic management practices of political parties, market orientation strategies, influences on market orientation strategies, performance of market orientation measures, and impacts of market orientation on organizational performance in relation to political parties, among others. Specifically, works of Baines (2001), Butler and Collins (1996), Henneberg (2004), Jaworski & Kohli (1993), Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Lees-Marshment (2001), and Narver and Slater (1990), among others are proposed to be reviewed. The literature review is expected to assist in identifying consensus, controversy, support, and gaps pertaining to extant thought regarding the market orientation strategies of political parties in developed and developing democracies.

PROPOSED RESEARCH METHOD

The method for the proposed research is a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The qualitative research method will comprise focus group discussions with officials of major political parties in Nigeria, scholars, some 'ordinary' Nigerians, and executives of relevant government and private agencies associated with politics and democracy in Nigeria (such as the INEC, civil liberty groups, advertising agencies, and the media, among others). The major constructs of the research (i.e., market orientation practices, antecedents of market orientation, and performance of Nigerian political parties) will be relevantly operationalized. Based on literature and input from the focus group discussion, a survey research instrument will be developed which will capture the items associated with each of the major research constructs, among others. In addition to validity test on the research instrument (expert opinion), the survey research instrument will be pre-tested to clarify order, and to assess survey time. The research instrument will then be administered to a sample of relevant respondents (executives of political parties in Nigeria). (A

copy of the research instrument for the proposed research is attached). Findings and recommendations from the proposed research are likely to assist in the understanding of political behaviour and management (Petrenko et al, 2020), especially in Nigeria, in addition to spurring future research efforts in cognate areas.

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Autobiographical Note:

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Appendix: Questionnaire for proposed research

Sir/Madam,

This is a Pan-Nigerian study aimed at improving management practices in Nigerian political parties, and data are being sought from party executives in Nigerian political parties. Your responses to the questions that follow will not be traced to you personally. Instead, your answers (along with answers from other executives of political parties) will be analyzed, interpreted, summarized and shared with interested persons and organizations for efficient and effective management of Nigerian political parties. A complimentary report of this research will be made available for your comments, if you so desire.

Thank you.

SECTION A:

To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning the management practices in your political party? (Answer by selecting one of the alternatives 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. You may add comments to justify your answers):

- 6 = very high extent
- 5 = high extent
- 4 = average extent
- 3 = low extent
- 2 = very low extent
- 1 = no extent at all

S/N	PARTY MARKETING MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	RESPONDENT'S CHOICE						COMMENTS
		6	5	4	3	2	1	
1.	Your party constantly analyzes its level of commitment to serve the needs and wants of its members, voters and other relevant stakeholders.							

2.	Your party measures voters', members' and other relevant stakeholders' satisfaction frequently and systematically.								
3.	Your party knows most of the voters, members and other relevant stakeholders in its geographical area of party operations.								
4.	Your party's executives maintain regular contacts with present and potential voters, members and other relevant stakeholders								
5.	Your party obtains ideas and suggestions from its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders in order to improve its party activities.								
6.	Frequent studies of your party's voters, members and other relevant stakeholders are carried out in order to know the political activities which voters, members and other relevant stakeholders will value in the future.								
7.	Your party frequently gathers data from its geographical area of political activities for use in planning its political activities.								
8.	Your party periodically contacts its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders to learn about the quality of its policies, services and programmes.								
9.	Systems are developed within your party to detect basic changes in its geographical area of political activities.								
10.	Your party is able to detect rapidly changes in the preferences of its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders.								
11.	Your party encourages its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders to make comments and complaints about its political activities.								
12.	Your party emphasizes intelligence (information) generation pertaining to its voters, members, funders and relevant stakeholders.								
13.	Your party is responsive to the needs and wants of voters, members, funders and relevant stakeholders.								

14.	Your party focuses on the needs and wants of its voters, members, funders and relevant stakeholders.							
15.	Your party emphasizes responsiveness to rival parties and political institutions (such as INEC).							
16.	Your party emphasizes issues relating to rival parties' activities.							
17.	Your party regularly analyzes the policies, services, programmes and activities of other rival political parties.							
18.	Your party emphasizes dissemination of relevant information to party executives, departments and units.							
19.	Your party engages in integration of its political activities.							
20.	Your party often examines the probable effect of changes in the political environment on its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders.							
21.	Periodic meetings are held between/among the departments/units in your party in order to discuss relevant issues in the party's line of political activities.							
22.	When something important happens to your party's voters, members and other relevant stakeholders, the entire party management becomes aware of this situation within a short period of time.							
23.	Reports are frequently distributed to different departments/units in your party regarding the future issues in the relevant political environment.							
24.	When one department, staff, or executive in your party detects important changes in the							

	political environment (e.g. other rival political parties), the other departments, staff and party executives in your party are rapidly alerted/informed.							
25.	The management team in your party regularly discusses the strengths, weaknesses and strategies of rival political parties.							
26.	Information on your party's voters, members, funders and other relevant stakeholders, as well as on the successes and failures of its political activities, is distributed to all departments, executives and staff of the party for effective use.							
27.	There is a rapid exchange of opinions and ideas among your party's departments/units in order to decide on how to respond to the strategies of rival parties.							
28.	The degree of satisfaction of your party's voters, members, funders and other relevant stakeholders is made known to all departments/units and staff in your party.							
29.	Your party uses information obtained from its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders to increase the quality of its performance.							
30.	Your party uses data from research on its geographical area of party operations for the management of its political activities.							
31.	Your party defines the quality of its political activities in terms of the satisfaction of its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders.							
32.	In the planning and development of new political activities, your party focuses on what is of value to its voters, members, funders and other relevant stakeholders.							
33.	Your party keeps the promises it makes to its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders.							
34.	The effort to develop new political activities in your party is periodically revised so as to ensure that these activities are in line with							

	desires, needs and wants of voters, members and other relevant stakeholders.							
35.	The complaints of voters, members and other relevant stakeholders are attended to rapidly in your party.							
36.	Your party is very sensitive to how its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders evaluate its political activities so that any necessary modifications may be undertaken in case of negative perceptions of voters, members and other relevant stakeholders.							
37.	Your party uses information obtained through research on its line of political activities to identify groups of voters, members and other relevant stakeholders with different needs, wants and expectations.							
38.	Your party tries to gain advantages in obtaining resources (unlike other rival parties) based on the understanding of the needs, wants, and expectations of its voters, members and other relevant stakeholders.							
39.	Your party has achieved growth in voter base through its political activities.							
40.	Your party has achieved encouraging generation of fund in its political activities.							
41.	Your party has achieved reduced cost in its political activities.							
42.	Your party has achieved improved voters and membership satisfaction level through its political activities.							
43.	Your party has achieved improved share of the political market in its political activities.							
44.	Your party has achieved improved personnel satisfaction in its political activities.							
45.	Your party has achieved improved social responsibility in its political activities.							
46.								

	Your party has achieved improved quality of services, policies and programmes offered in its political activities.							
47.	Your party has been achieving its long term goals in its political activities.							
48.	Your party has been achieving its short term goals in its political activities.							
49.	Your party argues for what it stands for and believes in it.							
50.	Your party assumes that voters will realize that its ideas are the right ones and will, therefore, vote for it.							
51.	Based on principles and ideology, your party refuses to change its ideas, policies or programmes even if it fails gain electoral or membership support							
52.	Your party focuses on selling its candidates, programmes and policies to voters, members and relevant stakeholders.							
53.	Your party utilizes marketing promotions techniques such as advertising, billboards, and handbills, to get access to its relevant audience.							
54.	Your party retains its policy/programme design, but recognizes that desired target audience may not want the policy/programme.							
55.	Your party uses research methods to understand the response of its relevant target audience to its practices, strategies and policies/programmes.							
56.	Your party employs the latest advertising and communications techniques to relate to its voters, members, funders, and other relevant stakeholders.							

57.	Your party tries to make its relevant voters, members, funders and other stakeholders accept its already-designed programmes, policies and ideas.							
58.	Your party designs its political policies, programmes, ideas and strategies to provide satisfaction to its voters, members, funders and other relevant stakeholders.							
59.	Your party uses research to identify the needs and wants of its target market and then designs its policies, programmes, and services based on research information to suit these needs and wants.							
60.	Your party does not attempt to change what its target audience needs and wants, but rather delivers the needs and wants of its target audience.							
61.	Your party, informally, ‘keeps an ear to the ground’, talks to party activists, and meets its publics of interest							
62.	Your party, formally, uses quantitative research techniques (electoral results,, public opinion polls, and privately commissioned studies, among others) and qualitative research techniques (such as focus group discussion and individual depth interviews, among others).							
63.	All things considered, you are satisfied with the management practices of your party regarding its attention to voters, members, funders and other relevant stakeholders.							
64.	All things considered, you are satisfied with the management practices of your party regarding your party’s attention to the							

<p>65.</p> <p>66.</p> <p>67.</p>	<p>practices of rival parties, political institutions and regulators.</p> <p>All things considered, you are satisfied with the how your party gathers, uses and responds to relevant data and information pertaining to voters, members, funders and other relevant stakeholders in its political activities.</p> <p>All things considered, you are satisfied with how your party gathers, uses and responds to relevant data and information pertaining to rival political parties, political institutions and regulators in its political activities.</p> <p>All things considered, you are satisfied with the overall performance of your party in its political activities.</p>							
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SECTION B

1. Title or position of respondent in the political party: _____
2. What is the name of your party? _____
3. What is the number of staff employed in your political party within your geographical area of political activities (at party secretariat)?
 - a. Between 1-9_____
 - b. Between 10-99_____
 - c. Between 100-499_____
 - d. Between 500 and above_____
4. Educational qualification(s) of respondent: _____
5. Professional qualification(s) of respondent: _____
6. Working experience (years) of respondent as a politician: _____
7. Age (years) of respondent: _____
8. Gender: _____
9. In which geo-political zone(s) in Nigeria does your party have the strongest membership/followership? _____
10. In which State(s) in Nigeria does your party have the strongest membership/followership? _____
11. With reference to question 10 above, in which local government area(s)/Counties does your party have the strongest membership/followership? _____
12. With reference to question 11 above, in which ward(s) does your party have the strongest membership/followership? _____
13. What are the three most serious problems confronting political parties in Nigeria